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AUTHOR	Kachi, Reiko; Choon-hwa, Lee
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the types of preservice training received by Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) and assistant language teachers (ALTs) before participating in team teaching (TT), also assessing how they described their experiences with TT, the kinds of knowledge and experiences they believed should be included in teacher education, suggestions for improving TT, and problems with TT. Data collection involved interviews with two JETs and three ALTs. Two of the respondents were Japanese, and three were American. Data analysis indicated that the JTEs had no training for TT, but all of the ALTs had received some hands-on training for TT (e.g., information on Japanese culture). All respondents believed that the success of TT depended on the teachers with whom they worked, the school, and the district. Lack of time for TT preparation and lack of English proficiency were significant obstacles for JTEs, who also mentioned problems with ALTs' uncooperative attitudes. JTEs felt that teachers needed better English proficiency, while ALTs recommended more practical and specific knowledge about the situation in Japan. Participants' suggestions to improve TT ranged from daily-based concerns to team teachers' classroom roles. Respondents unanimously reported lacking channels to access upper educational administrators. The questionnaire is appended. (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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A Tandem of Native and Non-native Teachers: Voices from Japanese and American Teachers in the EFL Classroom in Japan

Kachi, Reiko

The Ohio State University (Columbus, Ohio)

Lee, Choon-hwa

Defense Language Institute (Monterey, California)

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Abstract

This is a preliminary study aiming at better teacher education for team teaching practice. JET program will be an optimal opportunity to lean/teach language and culture, for both experienced non-native English speaker teachers and relatively inexperienced native English speaking assistant teachers, needless to say for the students. In reality, however, frustration and concern toward this practice have been expressed more actively than satisfaction. By means of face-to-face and internet/fax interviews, this study reveals a big obstacle in team teaching practice from teachers' point of view. Though this study was conducted on Japanese JET program, the findings are applicable to similar contexts, such as in Korea.

I. Introduction

Like other countries in which English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) mainly in the classroom, Japan has been suffering from the lack of authentic input and language use in the English classroom. English educators in Japan have struggled to teach English for the purpose of communication beyond grammar and reading comprehension. As attempts to solve this chronic problem, Japanese educators have introduced the communicative language teaching approach and native-speakers of English in the secondary school English classroom since the late 1980s. Each of these native speaker teachers is supposed to teach English as a team with a Japanese English teacher. The major purpose of this team-teaching (TT) is to improve students' communicative competence.

TT is a part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program promoted by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, in cooperation with host institutions such as local governments and district schools. Wada (Cominos, 1992), a former foreign language curriculum specialist of the Ministry of Education in Japan, defined TT in Japan as follows:

> Team teaching is a concerted endeavor made jointly by the Japanese teacher of English (JTE) and the assistant language teacher (ALT) in an English language classroom in which the students, the JTE, and the ALT are engaged in communicative activities. (Brumby & Wada 1991, cited by Garant 1992)

Since English is the dominant foreign language in Japan, most ALTs are native speakers of the language. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education (2000), 5,456 (93.5%) out of 5,835 participants in the JET program in 1999 were native-speakers of English, and most of them served as ALTs. If implemented properly, TT would be a great opportunity for developing English communicative competence of the students as well as JTEs. Also, TT should deepen multicultural understanding not only of the students but also of ALTs and JTEs. In theory, students should be able to enjoy Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development by completing the challenging task of communicating with ALTs in their foreign language with the scaffolding offered by JTEs.

However, since its launching in 1987, the ramifications of TT have revealed many problems rather than positive effects. (e.g., Kawamura & Sloss 1992). These shortcomings range from gaps between JTEs' perceived problems in TT and the objectives of the JET program that the program organizers recognize, to teachers' lack of time to prepare for team teaching lessons, to problems based on everyday teaching practices. To address these issues, more classroom-based action research should be recommended (Zephir, 2000). In addition, studies that investigate overall teacher education programs for TT and the effect of the existing teacher education programs seem to be needed.

Based on the present researchers' own experiences as junior and senior high school teachers who have engaged in TT and the review of other existing studies, the following hypothesis was arrived at: "Teacher education must be the key to better implementation of TT." Accordingly, the present study investigated constraints and

obstacles in TT through the voices of both ALTs and JTEs. These teachers' voices and suggestions with regard to TT are expected to be a starting point in fostering professional development and to provide useful information for teacher education programs including TT in Japan.

II. Review of Literature

One of the salient issues in TT in the JET program seems to be the lack of teacher training among team teachers (Kawamura & Sloss, 1992; Comminos, 1992; Iwami, 1992; Tajino & Tajino, 1999). According to Kawamura and Sloss' (1992) survey of JTEs who have been involved in TT, 79.4 percent of ALTs working at the schools that responded to the survey have neither teaching qualifications nor prior teaching experience. In addition, 82.4 percent of the ALTs majored in subjects not directly related to teaching English as a foreign language. Iwami (1992) points out that the Japanese Ministry of Education should execute these programs only after sufficient preparation and training of team teachers.

On the other hand, in the interview with Wada, Cominos (1992) asked him about ALTs' lack of training in English language teaching. Wada mentions that it was impossible to find sufficient numbers of professionals to meet the demand for ALTs. Contrary to the JTEs' responses in the survey (Kawamura & Sloss, 1992) to the effect that ALTs' lack of formal teaching qualifications and prior teaching experiences is noteworthy, Wada states that ALTs' personality traits are more important than their professional knowledge about language teaching. In addition, according to Wada, he

found from his working experiences with ALTs that ALTs who have had any professional training in teaching English tended to look down on JTEs because JTEs generally don't have much knowledge about the latest trends in that field.

Another important issue pointed out by researchers is the importance of collaboration between ALTs and JTEs (Cominos, 1992; Kahny et al., 1992; Wada & Commos, 1994). According to Wada (Cominos, 1992), team teachers' flexibility and positive attitudes towards each other are essential components in the make-up of effective team teachers. The collaboration between ALTs and JTEs seems to be essential in terms of preparing a lesson plan as well as establishing rapport to cope with the difficult situations confronted in everyday teaching practices. According to Kawamura and Sloss (1992), JTEs responded in the survey that 83.3 percent of team teaching classes were preceded by joint preparation and carried out by ALTs and JTEs. However, 79.9 percent of JTEs surveyed said that they did not have a fixed time for pre-class preparation.

From the perspective of ALTs, on the other hand, many of them are showing strong frustration in response to being used as "tape-recorders" and "game machines" (Matsumoto, 2000). JTEs usually do all the instruction and ALTs are allowed only to be drillmasters to improve students' pronunciation, which they call being "tape recorders." On other occasions, JTEs ask ALTs to take over and play games to reinforce the idea that learning English is fun. We have established two hypotheses as a result of observing this situation: (1) JTEs avoid, consciously or unconsciously, conversing with ALTs in English in front of the students. We tentatively attribute this to the fact that many Japanese teachers are concerned with their lack of oral English fluency, which they think

might make them lose credibility as English teachers. (2) Either ALTs or JTEs don't have a clear vision of what they should do in TT. For example, ALTs are waiting for JTEs to give them "instruction," namely, to tell them what to do. There is a great discrepancy between what ALTs think their role is and what JTEs expect ALTs to do in the classroom, which is to function as the "teacher."

III. The Study

1. Research Questions: In order to take up voices from both ALTs and JTEs, the following research questions were created by the researchers based on the literature review.

(1) What kind of pre-service training did ALTs and JTEs receive before they engaged themselves in TT?

(2) How do ALTs and JTEs describe their experiences in TT?

(3) What kinds of knowledge and/or experiences do ALTs and JTEs think, on the hind site, should be included in teacher education?

(4) What are ALTs' and JTEs' suggestions in order to improve TT practice?

(5) What is the biggest problem that ALTs and JTEs sensed in TT practices?

2. Methodology and Procedure

In the present study, one of the researchers conducted interviews with two JTEs and three ALTs either face-to-face or via email/facsimile. All the interviews were carried out based on a questionnaire comprised of open-ended questions about TT. The

English version of the questionnaire was given to the ALT participants, who are all Americans (appendix A), while the Japanese version was provided with Japanese teachers (appendix B) in order to let them express their feelings and opinions more easily in their native language. Face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed. The Japanese email interviews were translated into English and shared by both researchers.

3. Participants

Two Japanese teachers and three American teachers were contacted and agreed to participate in the present study. These teachers were not chosen by random sampling, but by recommendations by school supervisors. None of the teachers work in the same school. One of the American teachers was in Japan, engaging in JET program at the time of the study, while the others were in the United States, still working as ESL teachers. The following is the demographic information of each participant.

Participants	Age	Gender	Nationality /Native Language	College Major	Teaching Experience (before TT for ALT)
J1	35	F	Japanese/ Japanese	English Education	13 years
J2	35	F	Japanese/ Japanese	English Education	13 years
A1	33	M	American/ English	Political Science	6 years
A2	33	F	American/ English	English	Student teaching
A3	26	F	American/ English	Japanese	None

IV. Findings

The findings are reported by means of answering research questions.

(1) Research question 1: *What kind of pre-service training did ALTs and JTEs receive before they engaged themselves in TT?*

Both of the two Japanese teachers (J1 and J2) answered they had no special training for TT. Since TT was launched in 1987, JTEs have taken the main responsibility of preparing and practicing TT. Therefore, without any established training and direction JTEs have to manage TT depending on their individual situations through "trial and error." J1 reported, "It started like, 'an ALT is coming to our school as a regular [instead of one-shot visit]. What should we do? We have to do something.'" J2 said, "The head teacher of English subject and other senior teachers just gave me some advice on how to make lesson plans, and so on."

On the other hand, the three ALTs' responses varied although all of them had the same hands-on training about TT both in the U.S. and Japan before they were engaged in TT. A1 did not regard the hands-on training provided by the Ministry of Education in Japan as a special training for TT, while A2 and A3 acknowledged this training to be TT training. These differences may come from the teachers' different teaching experience. That is, since A1 had already had English teaching experiences and cultural knowledge in Japan, he might have expected something beyond the TT training provided and felt frustrated with it.

The ALTs' training included information on Japanese culture, mainly about Japanese customs, and bits and pieces of advice such as "ALTs should never correct JTEs' English in front of the students," from experienced ALTs. This kind of

information was probably not appropriate to A1, who had lived in Japan for more than 2 years before.

(2) Research Question 2: *How do ALTs and JTEs describe their experiences in TT?*

All the participants said that the success of TT depended on the teachers with whom they worked, the school, and the district to which they were assigned. In other words, they believed that the characteristics of the co-teachers, the size and location of the schools, and the educational policy of the districts have an impact on their TT practices.

With regard to the obstacles in TT, the lack of time for TT preparation seems to be one of the most serious concerns for JTEs. J1 said, "The biggest problem is that we don't have time either for meetings with ALTs or for developing materials for effective TT. Even if ALTs have a lot of time, we, JTEs, are always extremely busy." A3 also complained about JTEs' busy schedules

Another concern is JTEs' lack of English proficiency. A3 recalled, "...the other teacher who tried to avoid me was a rather old female teacher. Her English level wasn't very high. Her students knew that. I didn't enjoy teaching with her much, 'cause she couldn't control her students. Her students didn't respect her much. A couple of students came to me and asked how correct the teacher's English was." A1 showed more frustration toward the TT situation. He said, "[There are] many problems, primarily related to teachers' language ability, and to curriculum [prescribed by Monbusho, or the Ministry of Education], and to various other difficulties regarding schools, class size,

discipline and so on." A3, who was a Japanese language major, stated her Japanese speaking ability helped her a lot in communicating with JTEs.

On the other hand, J2 attributed unsuccessful TT practice to the ALTs' uncooperative attitude. She said, "Some ALTs are cooperative, and others are not. There are some ALTs who are not very enthusiastic. If it is the case, the burden of JTEs increases."

(3) Research Question 3: *What kinds of knowledge and/or experiences do ALTs and JTEs think, on the hind site, should be included in teacher education*?

Both J1 and J2 showed their concern about their English proficiency. J1 said, "I am always worried about my REAL proficiency, even though I have managed to impress my students so far." J2 also commented that she needed more American cultural knowledge. A1 expressed his high expectations towards JTEs by saying, "[We need] training, workshops, teachers with strong English ability, teachers who are leaders and strict with the students; and a new curriculum."

The other ALTs made suggestions for ALT training. A2 said, "I would have appreciated more practical and specific knowledge about our situation in Japan, for example the characteristics of Japanese teachers. In addition, since many of the participants in the JET program were fresh from college, I observed that some of us were in need of training on how to respect different cultures and how to behave like a teacher." A3 emphasized the advantage of using videotapes in ALT pre-service training sessions. She recommended that training sessions include the whole class management instead of specific classroom activities.

(4) Research Question 4: *What are TT teachers' suggestions in order to improve TT practice?*

The participants' suggestions varied, ranging from daily-based concerns to the team teachers' role in the classroom. JTEs were more concerned with methods and ideas that they could utilize in daily teaching, while two ALTs sought more fundamental reexamination of the ALT's role in TT. J2 said, "For novice teachers, seminars on methods and approaches for TT would be helpful. JTEs should attend the ALTs' seminars," and J1 made a similar comment: "I want effective lesson plans, useful hand-outs, and etc. I want something practical that I can use in my class."

On the other hand, both A1 and A2 suggested that TT would be improved if ALTs were recognized as competent teachers. A1 said, "[They should] emphasize to the primary teachers that we ALTs are serious, and CAN be a great source for them and the students. But classroom-management MUST be improved." A2's reflections on TT were as follows: "The biggest suggestion I would like to make in order to improve the program is that they could and should expect more from ALTs. At the beginning of the program, there was so much downtime, and I came to think we were not considered capable or important. Americans need to feel the sense of achievement. Right now, they [JET program administrators] depend on ALTs to find something to do. I edited a newsletter for JTEs, but not everyone is interested or talented in such a thing."

Interestingly, A3, who was fresh out of college and did not have any teaching experience before participating in the JET program, said that she had no specific suggestions except for using videotapes in teacher training. She stated that she was not

interested in becoming a real teacher in the future, and her main purpose of attending the JET program was to live in Japan to improve her Japanese language competence.

(5) Research Question 5: *What is the biggest problem that ALTs and JTEs sensed in TT practices?*

The participants' responses to this question are the most remarkable to the present researchers because the participants unanimously said they had no channel to access the upper educational administration. A1 expressed a very strong frustration:

> This is perhaps my BIGGEST complaint! I work for a Board of Education (Kyoiku Iinkai), but in one year and a half, I have NEVER had a meeting, ANY meeting, with the administrative people, in which we could offer suggestions, ideas, deal with important matters and so on. NOT ONCE! This suggests to me that very little REAL priority is given to our role in the education system.

Besides the issues that were introduced in existing literature on TT in Japan, such as some JTEs' lack of English proficiency, JTEs' lack of class preparation time, and ALTs' lack of professional knowledge, the results of the present study include two new findings. One is that most of the ALTs who participated in the present study want to be more involved in the Japanese educational system and want to be "insider teachers" instead of "visitors from outside." The other is that both ALTs and JTEs have no communicational channel through which they can access the upper educational administration so that they can pass on their precious TT experiences to other teachers.

V. Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the participants' perceived difficulties and opinions about their TT practices, the researchers made the following suggestions for four areas of teacher education and TT, in particular.

Firstly, Japanese educational administrators who are in charge of employing both JTEs and ALTs in secondary schools should reconsider teachers' qualifications. Japanese Ministry of Education officials who are responsible for recruiting ALTs should realize that a native speaker's proficiency in English is not the only qualification to be an effective English teacher. ALTs' professional knowledge and experiences in language teaching, or at least in education, seem to play a crucial role in the performance of successful TT and, therefore, should be considered one of the important qualifications for being ALTs. ALTs who have professional knowledge in the field of education, although they might be more critical, tend to be more serious about TT than ALTs who do not. ALTs' critical attitudes toward TT, which may be regarded as a negative trait in Japanese culture, should be positively embraced as offering a potential to improve TT. In addition, for JTEs, their level of English proficiency should be more emphasized in the consideration of teacher qualification.

Secondly, establishing pre-service teacher training seems to be urgent. It should include the description of the ALT's specific roles as a responsible teacher and training session focused on improving English proficiency for the JTE. Also, TT specific training with regard to lesson plans, teacher collaboration, and decision making should be included in pre-service teacher training. In addition, multicultural education presenting

detailed, relevant cultural information, should be emphasized in the teacher-training program in order to prevent cultural misunderstanding and unnecessary conflicts between ALTs and JTEs and between ALTs and Japanese students.

Thirdly, on-going in-service training at different levels is recommendable. School or local level teachers' meetings are expected to provide team teachers with opportunities to discuss lesson plans and reflect teaching practices as well as to establish rapport. Small group meetings or forums may be useful especially to improve JTEs' English proficiency and to enhance ALTs' understanding of Japanese culture and students. Also, teachers' reflection on TT should be shared with one another and with administrators and incorporated into educational decision making and teacher training programs. For instance, ALTs' reflective reports on TT at the end of their contracts will be a valuable resource for English education in Japan. As Kwo (1996) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) point out, this reflective report will help to build teachers' own critical thinking skills and allow them to capture first-hand experiences of their growth as thinkers, learners, and teachers as well as provide knowledge of practices for other teachers.

Lastly, summer workshops, as part of in-service training, can be useful opportunities to foster teacher development. During the weeklong training, teachers can have opportunities to obtain tips to improve their teaching practices and to suggest better ideas for TT through sharing and exchanging feedback on their TT experiences and reporting successful TT practices or teacher research. In addition, the summer workshop will provide team teachers, teacher educators, and administrators with communication

channels, which is an important factor in the professional development of in-service educators to avoid teacher isolation (Robinson, unpublished).

Considering that Japanese education has limited financial and human resources as well as specific EFL constraints, implementing the above suggestions for teacher training may be a complicated and time-consuming task. However, without a commitment to establishing and implementing specific team teacher training, TT in the Japanese secondary school may end up substantially wasting the money, time, and efforts of Japanese educators. We hope that the present study will promote the re-evaluation of the TT practice by teachers and educational administrators and provide a useful inspiration to improve TT in Japan.

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QUESTIONAIRE

I. Demographic Information

1. Age ( )
2. Gender ( )
3. College major ( )
4. Native language ( )
5. Teaching experience
   - What subject? ( )
   - What level? ( )
   - When? How long? ( )
6. Previous teacher training, teacher education
   Specify: when/ where/ what kind?

II. Team-Teaching

1. Did you receive any teacher training or teacher education before you engaged in team-teaching? (or before teaching in Japan?)

2. Have you ever found (or did you ever find) team-teaching problematic?

   If yes, what kind of problems did you have? How and why?

   Class management?
   Collaboration with the partner teacher?
   Students' disciplines?
   School administration?
   Traveling among the schools?
   Language proficiency?
   Teaching style difference?
   Cultural differences?
   Others?

3. Have you experienced (or did you experience) great team-teaching?
   Why do you think it was successful?

4. What kind of experience (knowledge) would help your team-teaching to be more successful?

   Pedagogical skills/ knowledge? (teaching methodology/ students' development)
   Content knowledge about the subject matter = English?
   Communication with the partner teacher?
   Cultural knowledge?
   Stability of status for ALTs?

5. What kind of role do you think you are expected to play in Team-Teaching?

6. (for ALT) Suppose you are offered another chance in the future, would you like to teach English for the same program in Japan?
   Why or why not?

7. (for JTE) If you had more time, what would you like to do to improve your Team-Teaching?

8. Do you have any suggestions for the pre- or/and in-service teacher training for Team-Teaching?

9. Would you like to attend, if offered, school-level workshops/ meetings for both ALTs and JTEs on the regular basis? Why or why not?
   How often?

   Would summer sessions help you? What kind of content would you expect from such sessions?

10. Do (or did) you have a channel to communicate with the upper educational administration to express your opinions (suggestions, questions, etc.) about Team-Teaching? Are (or were) you encouraged to do so?

TT(ティームティーチング)に関する質問状

I　人口統計学的データ

1. 年齢　　(　　)
2. 性別　　(　　)
3. 大学での専攻　　(　　)
4. 母語　　(　　)
5. 教育経験　　(　　)年
6. 教員研修について

   どのくらい頻繁に教員トレーニングまたは教員教育を受ける機会がありますか？主催者は誰ですか？(県、市町村、学校、学年、教科、など)教科指導については、どんなことがトレーニング、または教育の主眼に置かれていますか？(メソッド・アプローチ、教室運営、教員の英語力の強化、など)

II　TTについて

1. 初めてTTを行う前に(またはその後に)、TTのための特別な研修を受けましたか。いつ、誰が主催で、どんなことを学びましたか。

2. TTには問題がある、と思ったことがありますか。もしあるとすれば、どんな問題ですか。詳しく例をあげて説明してください。(教室運営、AETとの連携、生徒の態度、校長・教頭の無理解、、AETとの文化の違い、英語力、など)

3. 今日はすばらしいTTが行えた、という経験はありますか。あるとすれば、なぜその授業はうまくいったのだと思いますか。

4. 今までのTT授業を振り返ってみて、こんな知識、技能があったらもっとうまくいったのに、と思うことがありますか。(AET の文化についての予備知識、メソッド・アプローチについての知識、英会話力、など)

5. TTにおいて、あなたは自分の役割はなんだと認識していますか。

6. TTはあなたにとって有意義ですか。生徒にとって役に立つものですか。現在のTT全般について、あなたの意見を教えてください。

7. もし時間が十分あったとしたら、TTをより成功させるためにどんなことをしたいですか。(AET文化についての本を読む、AETと学校内外でもっと親しく付き合う、英会話学校に通う、英語圏に短期留学する、など)

8. TTをよりよく行うために、新米の先生やベテランの先生にどんな研修を行うべきだと思いますか。意見があれば。

9. 学校内で定期的にJTEの先生方全員とAETのミィーティングの時間が取れるとしたら参加しますか。どのくらい頻繁が望ましいですか。

   夏に集中してTTのための研修を行うのは、効果があると思いますか。

10. あなたは上位機関(県教育委員会、文部省など)にTTについての自分の意見を求められていますか。意見が反映される環境は整っていますか。

ありがとうございました。

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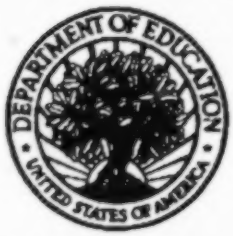

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